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Your Arizona Parent School Connection

Assistive Technology

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 mandates that to ensure students receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams must consider the need for assistive technology when developing the IEP. Federal regulations for implementation of the provisions of IDEA 2004 state that schools must ensure assistive technology (AT) devices and/or services need to be made available to a child with a disability if required as a part of the child's special education; related services; or supplementary aids and services. When considering the need for assistive technology, it is important to understand the following terms.

Assistive Technology Device is defined in IDEA 2004 as any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device.

Assistive Technology Service means any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. The term includes:

- a) the evaluation of the needs of a child with a disability including a functional evaluation of the child in the child's customary environment;
- b) purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of a device;

- c) selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing AT devices;
- d) coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with AT devices;
- e) training or technical assistance for a child with a disability or, if appropriate, that child's family; and
- f) training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing education or rehabilitation services), employers, or other individuals who provide services to employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of that child.

The SETT Framework

When considering the need for assistive technology while developing a student's IEP, the Assistive Technology Team at the Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services (ADE/ESS) suggests that teams use a framework to guide consideration, such as the SETT. It is a guide that can be utilized when gathering data in order to make effective assistive technology decisions. The SETT acronym stands for Student, Environment, Tasks, and Tools.

The following are examples of the types of questions that IEP teams should be discussing when using the SETT Framework. During the discussion, thought should be given to the student's needs identified in the five areas in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) (social/emotional, physical, cognitive, communication, and academic) across all environments (e.g.,

classroom, playground, bus, etc.) in which the child functions.



Student

- ✓ What are the student's special needs?
- ✓ What are the student's strengths?
- ✓ How does the student feel about technology?

Environment

- ✓ What materials and equipment are currently available in the environment?
- ✓ What is the physical arrangement?
- ✓ Are there special concerns?
- ✓ What is the instructional arrangement?

Tasks

- ✓ What activities take place in the environment?
- ✓ What activities support the student's curriculum?
- ✓ How might the activities be changed to accommodate the student's special needs?
- ✓ How might technology support the student's active participation in those activities?



Tools

- ✓ What no-tech, light-tech, and high-tech options should be considered when developing a system for a student with these needs and abilities doing these tasks in these environments?
- ✓ What strategies might be used to invite increased student performance?
- ✓ How might these tools be tried out with the student in the environments in which they will be used?

(Excerpted from The SETT Framework: Critical Areas to Consider When Making Informed Assistive Technology Decisions by Joy Zabala, M.Ed., ATP.)

Supports for School Personnel

Teams should also determine the need for training of the student, staff, and family members to ensure the assistive technology is being utilized appropriately across environments. Who will do the training, as well as when and where it will occur should also be discussed. School staff may be able to provide the training or in some cases the company that sells the device can do the training.

Monitoring

Data collection should be an integral part of the use of any AT device. It is vital that information about how often the student is using the device and if it is meeting the child's needs, be collected and reviewed regularly. Team decisions on how the effectiveness of the device will be measured and how often that will be reviewed need to be made during the IEP meeting. After a trial period if it is determined that the device is not effective, the IEP team will need to consider other options.

Assistive Technology Ideas

The Parent Information Network (PIN) has several documents that list assistive technology ideas for various academic and life skills areas. They provide a range of options from no-tech or light-tech to high-tech. The *Assistive Technology Ideas* documents can be requested by calling the PIN at 877-230-PINS or by downloading them from the PIN website at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals.

AT Consideration Tool

The IEP team's consideration of assistive technology must be documented in the IEP, as well as, what devices and services are most appropriate for the student. An *AT Considerations in the IEP* tool has been developed by the ADE/ESS and can be downloaded from their website at www.ade.state.az.us/ess/at/considertemp.asp or by contacting the PIN at 877-230-PINS.

AT Considered:

- ☐ Needed
☐ Not Needed

Date Initiated:

AT Considerations in the IEP

This document can be used before, during or after the IEP to assist teams in writing the Present levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance; to guide discussion about Accommodations and Modifications, Support for Personnel, imbedded in Goals, Supplemental Aids and Services. Some teams may attach this form to the IEP to document AT Consideration and Next Steps.

The following suggested statements may help you write a complete PLAAFP for the student. If the following statements describe the student, include the statements and describe how the student approaches these tasks and success of previous modifications in the PLAAFP. The IEP team needs to consider potential solutions for the student. Document IEP decisions and training through the IEP.

(Check all that apply)	Task Make a check in the box before appropriate relevant statements.	Describe AT documented in the IEP	More AT Info Needed
	1. Writing is slow, laborious or illegible and inadequate in one or more curricular areas (specify). Which IEP goal does this impact?		
	2. Reading is a challenge in one or more curricular areas. Which IEP goal does this impact?		
	3. There is a discrepancy between decoding and reading comprehension. Which IEP goal does this impact?		
	4. Struggles with concepts of time, money and measurement. Which IEP goal does this impact?		
	5. Struggles with math concepts (ex. addition, multiplication, subtraction, division, fractions, decimals) Which IEP goal does this impact?		
	6. Struggles with word problems. Which IEP goal does this impact?		
	7. Cannot communicate basic needs. Which IEP goal does this impact?		
	8. Unfamiliar communication partners cannot understand out-of-context speech.		

Developed by a collaborative effort between ADE/ESS, SWHD, AZ School Districts and AT Specialists.

Note: Only a portion of the form is featured above.

What if you disagree?

If the parents disagree with the IEP team's decision(s) regarding assistive technology devices and/or services, they should put their concerns in writing. These written concerns should be shared with the IEP team members. Should concerns still exist; parents can continue to share those concerns as they follow the chain of command (i.e. principal, special education director, etc.). If the concerns are not resolved by utilizing this informal approach, parents have the right to seek resolution through the formal state complaint process.

Making AT EZ in AZ with the ADE

With the development of an Assistive Technology Team, the Arizona Department

of Education has made the commitment to provide technical assistance and support to students, schools and families regarding the identification and implementation of AT devices and services. They provide a wide range of supports and services as outlined on their website www.ade.state.az.us/ess/at. They can also be reached by calling 602-364-3243.

Short Term Loan Library

The ADE hosts a loan library collaboratively through the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP). It is a repository of AT items available for short term loan to schools. There is no charge for this service and can be accessed for the following reasons:

- ❖ Consideration/Assessment as part of IEP development process or IEP recommendations
- ❖ Classroom implementation on a time limited basis
- ❖ Serve as loaner during device repair or while waiting for funding
- ❖ Provide an accommodation for a student on a short-term basis
- ❖ Professional development (teacher training, skill development, etc.)

This service can only be accessed by designated school staff so IEP teams will need to consult with that staff member when considering utilizing this service. The devices, ranging from light tech to high tech, can be borrowed for up to 4 weeks. This service provides IEP teams the opportunity to “test drive” a variety of devices and explore the options available before investing a lot of money or resources in a device that may not be appropriate for the student.

The following are some terms that IEP team members might not be familiar with when considering assistive technology.

Augmentative or Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to a system or device that facilitates alternate forms of communication for children who are unable to utilize spoken language.

Environmental Control Units (ECUs) are devices that allow a person to control their surrounding environment through alternate

means. This can include switch activated toys, infrared controls over electronic appliances, or voice activated computers that turn on and off the lights. They provide an alternative form of access to electronic devices.

National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) is a technical standard used by publishers to produce source files (in XML) that may be used to develop multiple specialized formats (such as Braille or audio books) for students with print disabilities. This format provides a means for presenting the content in different ways. Once the files have been produced for the printed material the content can be presented in different ways, such as: Braille, large print, text to speech books, etc.

References

Arizona Department of Education. Exceptional Student Services. Assistive Technology. (2006) www.ade.state.az.us/ess/at

Family Center on Technology and Disability. www.fctd.info *Assistive Technology and the IEP*. FCTD Fact Sheets.

National Instructional Materials Center (NIMAC). (2007) www.nimac.us

National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS). (2006) <http://nimas.cast.org/about/index.html>

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